

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Andes Central School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2002-2003**

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Dates of On Site Visit: March 4-5, 2003

Date of Report: March 10, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Andes Central Schools Special Education Comprehensive Plan

Student files

The Wave newspaper

Files of South Central Cooperative Birth to 3 teacher

Files of Andes Central home/school coordinator and counselor

Andes Central School District Manual

Promising practice

Based on data information from the comprehensive plan, staff records and newspaper clippings, the steering committee agreed that the district always meets the child find requirements. The use of the home/school coordinator as a liaison between the school and community to identify children with needs is a promising practice. The steering committee agreed the use of a teacher assistance team whenever there are teacher referrals was a promising practice.

Meets requirements

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the district always meets the referral procedures requirements, and the requirements for children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools. There are no private schools in the district. However, policies and procedures are in place if this should change. The steering committee agreed that the district always meets the requirements for students placed by the school district in private schools, and for suspension and expulsion rates.

Needs improvement

The steering committee determined in their self-assessment that the district needs to improve personnel and professional development and work on improving results through performance goals and indicators. The steering committee recommends that the district should write out a professional development plan annually.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team agrees with all areas for promising practices for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of meets requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.

Issues requiring immediate attention

An IEP in effect as of the December 1, 2002, child count was not found for (2) students. If documentation of IEPs active on December 1, 2002, cannot be found for these students, the federal flow through funds will be withheld.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child

reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Administrator Survey Tabulation Sheet

Student Survey Tabulation Sheet

Andes Central School District Financial Records

Student IEPs

Andes Central School District Manual

Comprehensive Plan

File Reviews

Annual Comprehensive Needs Assessment Report

Special Education Discipline Guide

Student file

Principal's records

Home/school coordinator records

Manifestation determination record in student's file

Behavior Plan in student's file

Minutes of Andes Central School Board Student Hearing on March 25th of 2002.

JMC Discipline records

Referrals

In-school suspension room logs

Counselor logs

Home/School Coordinator logs

HS Alternative school and Elementary Alternative classroom logs

DDN Campus (SD state student records management system implemented second semester 2002/03)

Promising practice

The steering committee determined areas of promising practice in their self-assessment to be an alternative high school classroom and an elementary classroom to accommodate students who do not learn in traditional settings. Another promising practice in the district is the availability of three counselors which allows each counselor a smaller number of students. The district has a home/school coordinator to assist in communication with parents for students with special needs.

Meets requirements

The steering committee determined areas that meet requirements in their self-assessment to be the district always provides FAPE, and meets the requirements for suspension/expulsion.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of promising practice for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas for meets requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Comprehensive Plan

Student File Review Tabulation Form

Parent Report Form (Form # 3)

Parental Prior Written Notice/Consent for Evaluation

Parental Rights Brochure

Student File Reviews

Multidisciplinary evaluation team report

Survey for Parents Request for information (form#1)

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded significant input is gathered from knowledgeable staff and parents in order to achieve a comprehensive evaluation prior to determining eligibility, valid and reliable evaluations are administered and that the IEP team uses the evaluations findings to determine if a disability exists. Parents receive copies of evaluation data and staff and parents determine appropriate evaluations applicable to the suspected area of disability. Evaluation/reevaluation procedures and instruments were found to be at a “meets requirements” level.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the area of meets requirements for reevaluation procedures to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Needs improvement

Through file review the team determined that the district needs to work on writing parental prior notice as an area in need of improvement. The team recommends that instead of specific names of evaluations to be given, the prior notice should indicate what areas are to be evaluated. An example would be to write achievement, ability, or speech/language rather than writing Woodcock- Johnson, or Wechsler. When a specific evaluation is listed and then it is found later that another may be more appropriate, consent has not been given for any assessment other than the evaluation that was written on the prior notice.

Out of compliance

24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures.

24:05:25:04:03 Determination of eligibility

24:05:25:06 Reevaluations

24:05:30:04 prior notice and parent consent

The review team found the following areas out of compliance in the process of validating the district’s self-assessment:

Evaluation procedures

The comprehensive evaluation must include functional evaluation. As an example, in five files reviewed functional assessment was not completed, while in eight files reviewed the district had completed functional evaluations, but parent permission was not documented on the prior notice for these evaluations.

In seven files reviewed transition assessments were given without parent consent. Students must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability. Evaluations in the area of secondary transition were not completed for two students whose files were reviewed.

Prior notice and parent consent

The Lake Andes school district does not provide appropriate written notice and obtain informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation.

Upon file review the monitoring team found one student file where a behavior assessment and an autism checklist had been completed, however no permission to evaluate was found. In two other student files, permission to evaluate was found for specific assessments, but documentation could not be found to support that these assessments were conducted. In four of ten files reviewed, a discrepancy was found between the assessments that permission was obtained for, and the actual assessments conducted.

Issues requiring immediate attention

In one student file a student was determined eligible under the category of mental retardation, but there was a discrepancy in evaluation results. For the last three evaluations the student was determined to be eligible for services under the category of specific learning disability. At his last evaluation his eligibility was changed to mental retardation because of a discrepancy in ability testing. This student must be reevaluated to determine appropriate eligibility for special education.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards
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Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Parental Rights brochure

PARENTAL PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE (Form #2)

Comprehensive Plan

Release of Information (Form #6)

Student Files

Student File Review tabulation

Andes Central Manual

Parent Survey Tabulation

Request for a Due Process Hearing (Form #7)

Meets requirements

The steering committee determined that the district meets the requirements addressed under procedural safeguards notice, under surrogate parents, and confidentiality and access for records. The steering committee also found the district to meet the requirements for complaint procedures and due process hearings.

Needs improvement

The steering committee agreed the district sometimes meets the requirements addressed under consent. When the committee looked at files for two students who had evaluations conducted by private evaluators one file showed proper documentation and one file did not.

Validation Results

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of meets requirements identified under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team was not able to validate the concern raised by the steering committee regarding independent evaluations. Data noted by the review team includes a section in the comprehensive plan which addresses independent educational evaluations.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Student file review tabulation form (SR) SURVEY FOR REGULAR AND SPECIAL Education
Personnel tab form

Survey for parents tabulation form (PR) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (TEACHER FORM)

Student file review tabulation for (FRT)

Survey for regular ed. And special ed. Personnel (TR)

Survey for administrators tabulation sheet (AR)

File review tabulation form (FRT)

Parental rights brochure

Prior written notice (form #2)

Parent surveys

Teacher surveys

Student survey tabulation sheet

Comprehensive plan

State provided IEP document

Promising practice

The steering committee determined a request for information distributed when conducting all initial evaluations and reevaluations to be a promising practice. The committee found the district's use of student surveys to personalize transition assessments and student awareness during the

evaluation/reevaluation process to be a promising practice. The steering committee also identified the use of accelerated math, accelerated reading, and accelerated writer computerized programs for students as a promising practice.

Meets requirements

The steering committee determined that the district ensures the IEP meeting is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. The committee also determined the district meets requirements addressed under IEP content, transition, and the district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and is in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee determined, through survey results, the district needs to improve the skills for employees to implement the IEP.

Out of compliance

The steering committee determined that lack of documentation that the district informs the parent of their right to bring other people to meetings is an area out of compliance.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The steering committee felt using accelerated math, accelerated reading, and accelerated writer computerized programs for students to be a promising practice. Although the steering committee identified these as promising practices they are widely used curriculum materials and do not constitute innovative program materials.

The steering committee identified a request for information distributed when conducting all initial evaluations and reevaluations, the district's use of student surveys to personalize transition assessments, and student awareness during the evaluation/reevaluation process as promising practices. These are all components of evaluation procedures required by administrative rule therefore they do not constitute a promising practice.

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee's finding for appropriate team membership under Individual Education Program. Additional information regarding IEP content is provided under "areas of out of compliance".

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of needs improvement identified under IEP content.

The review team validates the steering committee's concern for informing parents of their right to bring other people to the meetings. The option to invite additional members to the IEP team meeting is at the discretion of the district or the parent.

Out of compliance

24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process. For each student beginning at age 14, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. For each student at age sixteen a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Through interview and file reviews the review team found transition evaluations were not administered for students approaching transition age in order to design an outcome oriented process

which promotes movement from school to post-secondary school activities. Five student files of transition age, were reviewed and the team did not find evidence of any transition evaluations. For transition-age students, the IEP requires a summary of the student's present level of performance that describes strengths and needs of the student in the context of the student's desired post-school vision. When reviewing files the monitoring team found seven files that did not link transition to the present levels of performance.

24:05:27:01:02 Development, review, and revision of individualized review program

Although the steering committee felt that the district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student, the review team found IEP development to be out of compliance for the Lake Andes school district. The present level of performance information about a student is the cornerstone of the IEP. Present levels of performance information that is required includes: strengths, weaknesses, parent input, areas/skills to be addressed, information from evaluations and functional assessment, observations, and how the disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In eight files reviewed present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and were not skill specific. Present levels of performance were vague, for example, "receptive/expressive language, reading, math, writing skills, and social skills." Because the district staff did not include skill specific information in the present levels of performance therefore, the present levels do not benefit the staff when writing goals and objectives.

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

Due to lack of specific transition assessment as noted in five student files reviewed transition information was not included in the present levels of performance resulting in a lack of identified transition services in the student's IEP.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

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Data sources used:

Andes Central Schools Special Education Comprehensive Plan

Student files

The Wave newspaper

Files of South Central Cooperative Birth to 3 teacher

Files of Andes Central home/school coordinator and counselor

Andes Central School District Manual

Promising practice

The district's preschool program is in close proximity to the kindergarten classroom. The students share the same playground, hallways, and restroom, and the preschool students attend parties in the

kindergarten classroom. There is also a preschool in the Lakeview Colony School for all students 4 and 5 years old. The school runs from about Oct. 1st to April 1st, five days per week. The students are taught German and some English as well learn other preschool activities.

Meets requirements

The steering committee agreed that children in the district receive services in the least restrictive environment with the support they need for their successful participation.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as promising practices for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team determined an area in need of improvement to be the use of the justification statement regarding least restrictive environment where documented on the IEP. The district should use the accept/reject format for each alternative placement.